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The time is not remote—it has perhaps come—for a detailed criticism and a general estimate of Henry George as an economist; not of the powerful agitator, nor of the great-hearted reformer, but of the acute critic and the virile thinker. But the immediate occasion for this should be something other than posthumous fragments, which even the most appreciative reader leaves, assenting to the application of McCulloch's dictum upon Robert Hamilton's "Progress of Society:" it "might without injury to his fame or the public interests have been allowed to continue in manuscript."

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*Unforeseen Tendencies of Democracy.* By EDWIN L. GODKIN. Pp. 272. Price, \$2.00. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1898.

Mr. Godkin's critical observations on politics, so familiar to readers of the *Nation*, occasionally lead to interesting and important conclusions respecting American political institutions in general. In the volume of essays before us he touches upon some aspects of these institutions which are at present exciting attention both in Europe and America. The first essay treats of equality, and in it the author desires to show that our ideas of equality have materially changed. In both the American and French revolutions "equality" signified the absence of exemptions and peculiar privileges, the equal liability of all men to burdens imposed by the state. This conception of equality interfered in no way with leadership as exercised by able and distinguished men; in fact one of the striking features of our early American history is seen in the deference paid to certain leaders of public opinion. At present this deference no longer exists. Our idea of "equality" has come to include equal political sagacity so that all men are held to be eligible to our highest offices and gifted with political insight. "The disregard of special fitness, combined with unwillingness to admit that there is anything special about any man . . . constitutes the great defect of modern democracy." According to the prevailing notion of "equality," says the author, experience and peculiar ability count for nothing. In an essay on the nominating system the author deals plainly with his subject. Our present method of nomination is, he declares, the "great canker of American institutions." The absence of the more intelligent and honest class of voters from the primaries is due first, to the great and increasing importance and variety of private affairs demanding close attention, and second, to the merely preliminary character of the primaries.

As to the decline of our legislatures, treated of in another essay, the author believes that it is well-nigh impossible for men of ability and independent thought to enter active political life. The boss everywhere stands in the way. Where such desirable men do secure a foothold through temporary subservience to the boss the author declares that their usefulness is greatly impaired by the existing methods of parliamentary procedure. The rules of our legislative bodies tend to suppress individuality and to render our representatives mere parts of a machine for transacting business; *i. e.*, for voting on bills and committee work. Legislatures as they are composed to-day excite the distrust of all classes. Mr. Godkin sees the cause of this partly in our economic condition. Hand in hand with the gradual lowering in the standard of legislative ability and capacity has come an enormous increase in the material wealth of the nation, and this increased material power finds itself largely in the hands of unscrupulous corporations. To legislative incompetence is added legislative corruption. The evil has been aggravated, as the writer explains, by the desire of individual legislators to retain prominence through the introduction of new legislation. We have more and poorer laws than ever before. The same thought was expressed by that American judge who, in the course of a decision, once declared that no man's life or property was safe while the legislature was in session. Do these conditions mark the definite decline of our legislatures? The author answers this query apparently in the affirmative. Democracies "seem to be getting tired of the representative system." With the exception of the constitutional convention representative assemblies are rapidly losing caste. Although nothing can compensate for the loss of popular interest in politics Mr. Godkin believes that much can be done to stimulate interest by a substitution of direct popular action for the representative system. He would especially favor an extension of the referendum.

The chief interest of the volume centres in the essay on the "Growth and Expression of Public Opinion." The great distinguishing feature of American public opinion has been seen to be the absence of acknowledged leaders. We have no admitted authority to guide the formation of general opinion, and this decay of authority in the realm of thought has led, as the author believes, to a marked disintegration of public opinion and to an absence of consistent party policy. "Neither party in America to-day has any fixed creed." The power of the boss is based largely on the fact that he crystallizes the scattered molecules of public opinion and produces therefrom a definite result. The author sees another

unfortunate feature of our public opinion in the decay of our ideal of political liberty, in the surrender of political power and the spirit of passive submission or indifference among the masses of our people. These are sacrifices to the golden calf. Public opinion "is moulded as never before by economic rather than by religious or moral or political considerations." As the acts repealing the English corn laws were passed solely "for the purpose of cheapening and enlarging the loaf," so is the world, and particularly America, "now governed mainly by ideas about the distribution of commodities." There can be little doubt about the correctness of this analysis. Private affairs are placed before politics, the individual before the public welfare by a large and, it seems, a growing class of Americans. Some readers will also agree with Mr. Godkin that the ultimate remedy is to be found in the referendum or some scheme of direct popular action in law-making. But meantime there are no signs of any such solution being adopted. The most decided difference of opinion exists with reference to the value of such a remedy. All present indications point rather to a further concentration of power in the hands of a few, not its return to the many. We are drifting toward a monocracy rather than a democracy. It is perhaps surprising that the author of "Unforeseen Tendencies" should mention this phenomenon yet lay no emphasis upon it. For many years the belief has been growing that in order to secure responsibility it is necessary to concentrate power; "we must trust some one" is a popular axiom in which the emphasis is being gradually laid on the "one." Collective bodies have become the object of deep mistrust. In order to secure a more complete responsibility on the side of the government we may choose one of two courses. Either we may discard the system of checks and balances by calling in a dictator or we may give back power and responsibility into the hands of the people by some plan of direct popular legislation. At present our desire for "a government without trouble" is rapidly leading us, not in the direction indicated by Mr. Godkin, but rather toward a dictatorship.

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*Law and Politics in the Middle Ages.* By EDWARD JENKS, M. A.,  
Reader in English Law in the University of Oxford. Pp. 352.  
Price, \$2.75. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1898.

Despite Mr. Jenks' modest disclaimer of severe scholarship, this treatise must be looked upon as a substantial contribution to the none